



BILL NUMBER: House Bill 180

TITLE: Juveniles - Sexting

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

HEARING DATE: March 25, 2021

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) and its members respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 180.

House Bill 180 defines “sexting,” namely that it is a mitigating factor in a juvenile proceeding for certain child pornography and obscenity charges and establishes specific exceptions of conduct, importantly including that the child did not consent to the conduct or that the child was coerced, threatened, or intimidated into committing the conduct. It generally prohibits the court from making dispositions of community detention or commitment if the conduct arose from sexting, and further allows a child to be referred to an educational program on sexting.

MDHTTF supports efforts to dismantle human trafficking by strengthening laws to prosecute traffickers, providing services and rehabilitation to victims, and increasing awareness of the issue. MDHTTF aims to keep trafficking victims out of the criminal justice system, and we are also incredibly vigilant about new and insidious ways that a trafficker can victimize a person, most especially and importantly children. As such, we very much appreciate this first step toward addressing sexting in Maryland. Further, we applaud the educational option in the bill, as awareness of new and potentially dangerous situations is critical to prevention and we are always mindful of the differentiation between what is a coercive act and not. MDHTTF believes HB 180 is a fantastic first step of many that is needed to address and rectify the *In Re: S.K.* case, and we look forward to being a part of the conversation moving forward.

For these reasons, MDHTTF respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 180.

About MDHTTF: Formed in 2007 by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Attorney General of Maryland, and the State’s Attorney for Baltimore City, MDHTTF serves as the lead investigative, prosecutorial, and victim services coordinating body for anti-human trafficking activity in the State of Maryland. MDHTTF has grown to include most law enforcement agencies in the State, all child-serving state agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations, most local State’s Attorney’s Offices, and dozens of victim service agencies. MDHTTF is comprised of five committees – legislative, law enforcement, victim services, public awareness, and training. During this time, MDHTTF has grown a robust understanding of the issue of human trafficking in Maryland.

For further questions, please contact the co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of MDHTTF, Amanda Rodriguez at arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org or Anne Wallerstedt at azwallerstedt@gmail.com.